The only safe conclusion is that the facts now at our disposal form an untrustworthy guide to more than tentative opinions.

While it is true that as yet our knowledge is insufficient to frame a theory of the beginnings of the Chinese and their culture which will meet with the unanimous assent of informed scholars, certain well-established facts even now at our disposal will inevitably enter into the completed picture.

First of all, we know that when the Chinese are first discerned fairly clearly through their earliest written records they were an agricultural folk living on the North China plain and in the lower part of the valley of the Wei, slowly extending their boundaries at the expense of peoples who lived on the hills and plateaus—and even on the plains—about them and whom they regarded as barbarians. Like the oldest civilizations in the West of which history apprizes us, those of Egypt and Babylonia, and also like early civilization in Northwest India, that of China first emerges into the dim light of pre-history in a fertile river valley. In early historic times the Yellow River emptied north of the Shantung promontory. The Hopei plain was largely a delta, traversed by a number of streams, and the region may well have been less arid than it is to-day and more inviting to agriculture. Much of North China was covered with loess, great areas of which appear not to have been heavily forested, and so could, with relative ease, be reduced to cultivation.

Rich finds of inscribed bones give early forms of the Chinese written character and corroborate about three-fourths of the names of the rulers of the shadowy Shang dynasty—the second in traditional Chinese history—that have come down to us in the ancient books. Recent excavations have added

much knowledge of the'Shang culture and show it to have been advanced.

Japanese discoveries in Eastern Mongolia, South Manchuria, and the Korean-Manchurian border of neolithic remains probably point to early, non-Chinese culture or cultures in these regions. Implements of neolithic man have been found in many parts of China proper.

Recently, moreover, archeology has revealed extensive evidences of a culture that was probably on the border line between the stone and the bronze age—chalcolithic, as it has been dubbed. The most startling of the discoveries are in the North. In a cave